

## TRANSITIONING TO MINISTERIAL

Mark R. Weir, D.Min  
Ministerial Director  
Upper Columbia Conference  
[MarkW@uccsda.org](mailto:MarkW@uccsda.org)

Each of you (I am assuming) have served as a pastor. Because of your effectiveness in that role (again, I am assuming this) you have been asked to help other pastors, to become the “pastor to the pastors.” While this is the phrase that is often used to describe the role of the Ministerial Director, it must become more than just a phrase. It must become reality. For that to happen, several steps can be taken to assist with the process.

1. You must make a mental shift. You are going from ministering to parishioners to ministering to fellow pastors. Yet even though you may still consider yourself to be their colleague, realize that in the minds of many pastors, you are now part of the “conference,” and depending on how the conference leadership team works will determine how you are viewed.
2. You must transition from being a colleague and consider yourself more of a consultant, one who is willing to help, assist, encourage, pray, listen – do whatever you can do – to help each pastor be more successful. This will include providing both resources and ideas. It will also include being available to the pastors on *their* terms and time schedules. And to do this, you must begin to build bridges with the pastors you serve as quickly as possible. There are several ways to do this:
  - a. Do an anonymous survey of your pastors. Ask them the questions you would have wished a ministerial director would have asked of you.
  - b. Visit every pastor as quickly as possible. When pastoring you visited the key leaders when you went to a new district, so do the same with your pastors.
  - c. Hold some area meetings to talk about the needs, wishes, coordinated evangelism, etc., that you perceive are necessary but also be sure to give ample time to hear from each of them.

The bottom line is this, get to know your pastors.

3. Strive to understand the local context and culture of the conference you serve in. If you have been serving as a pastor in your conference before becoming the Ministerial Director you will already understand your field. However, just because church life happens in one way where you have been serving, do not assume it is the same everywhere in the conference. You most likely have been serving in a larger, perhaps multi-staff situation. That is radically different from the two-to-four church districts that many of our pastors serve. If you are coming in new from another conference, you need to endeavor to learn as much as you can and as quickly as you can about the new conference you now serve in.
4. Make sure you have read and understand your new job description. Ministerial Directors serve in many different settings. Large conferences will have more resources. Small conference may require you to cover several departments, or you may be serving as a pastor while ministering to the other pastors in your conference. There is no “one size fits all” reality. Therefore, network

with other Ministerial Directors, particularly those who serve in a similar sized conference. Also, be sure you know what your Conference President expects of you. Make sure you have as much clarity as you can get regarding what he/she desires to see happen. It is vital to have a good working relationship with the President.

5. Communicate effectively. You are now the link between the administration and the pastors. You need to be able to convey what leadership thinks/wishes, but also be an advocate for the pastors. In addition, you will be sending information out to your pastors. Make sure that it is clear, and concise. If everything rises and falls with leadership and communication, then strive to become much more proficient at both.
6. Finally, there are some new realities you will be facing. You no longer have a home church, and this is a significant change, especially for your spouse. Suddenly, church family means something completely different. You are now in different churches, meeting new and unfamiliar people, many of whom may be suspicious of you and who may not always appreciate you. There is also the need to balance taking speaking appointments and simply visiting churches and observing what is happening and what your pastors are experiencing.